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LETTER DATED 28 JULY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 28 July 1999 addressed to you by Mr. Tariq Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq. The letter conveys a strong protest from Iraq at the destruction of the seven specimens of VX nerve gas at the Special Commission's premises in Baghdad, which appears to be a cover-up of the scheme contrived by the Special Commission in 1998 when it alleged that there were traces of VX agent on remnants of Iraqi missile warheads. It further calls for a full inventory to be made of all items at the Special Commission's premises in Baghdad by an impartial, professional team in order to bring the facts to light and vindicate Iraq's rights, which were ignored and undermined by the Special Commission for eight years in the name of the United Nations and the Security Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 28 July 1999 from the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

The seven specimens of VX nerve gas having been destroyed yesterday, Tuesday, 27 July 1999, and further to our note verbale addressed to you on the same day through Mr. Prakash Shah, your personal representative, requesting that the specimens should be preserved and that they should not be destroyed pending further investigation of the matter, I should like to inform you that we protest in the strongest terms against the step that has been taken. We do so for the following reasons:

1. The mandate of the team, which was taken as a pretext for this step, was established on the basis of a letter from Richard Butler. At that time, the Security Council was not aware that there was a quantity of VX nerve gas at the Special Commission's premises at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad.

2. This fact was revealed only after the team had arrived in Baghdad, and this gives it the character of a new element that requires investigation in view of the serious nature of the matter, of the suspicions surrounding the VX issue that arose from the conduct of the Special Commission and from the differing analyses of the warhead remnants at the three (American, French and Swiss) laboratories and of the relevance of the foregoing to the credibility of the position adopted by the Special Commission on this issue and on all the disarmament issues.

3. The Council's discussions saw an obvious endeavour to cover up the facts that was led by the United States of America. It would have been more appropriate to adopt a position that accorded with rules of law and the principles of morality and sought to uncover the facts, while the team's mandate was established by you at a time when the whole truth was not known to you or to the Council. We are very surprised at the statement made to the Security Council on 26 July by Mr. Janantha Dhanapala, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, to the effect that you believed that it would be best to comply with the original mandate of the team and destroy the specimens despite the new fact that had come to light since that mandate had been established.

4. This position announced by Mr. Dhanapala in the Council as expressing your conviction was taken as a key pretext for the destruction of the nerve gas specimens in the manner described above. Great damage has been done not only to Iraq's case but also to the credibility and presumed neutrality of the United Nations now that the chance to determine the truth with respect to the matter of the nerve gas has been so precipitously destroyed.

5. Iraq expresses deep regret and protests in the strongest terms at this action. It appears to us to be a cover-up of the scheme contrived by the Special Commission in 1998 when it alleged that there were traces of VX on remnants of Iraqi missile warheads on the basis of a suspect analysis carried out in an American laboratory. The truth is that it was these specimens, those

that have been at the Special Commission's premises in Baghdad, that were used by elements in the Special Commission deliberately to contaminate the warhead remnants. Indeed, the other specimens taken from the same warheads that were removed to France and Switzerland showed no traces of VX. This constitutes significant evidence that the Special Commission's allegations concerning all the disarmament areas were false, and it is one more indication of collusion between the Special Commission and the United States (the source of these specimens) in fabricating pretexts and lies in order to prolong the unjust embargo imposed on Iraq.

We deem it essential that a comprehensive inventory of all items at the Special Commission's premises in Baghdad should be made by a neutral, professional team, with the participation of diplomats representing the members of the Security Council, in order to determine all the facts concerning the contents of the premises and their relevance to the honesty of the Special Commission, to the reputation of the United Nations and to the rights and legitimate interests of Iraq that were ignored and undermined by the Special Commission for eight years in the name of the United Nations and the Security Council.

(Signed) Tariq AZIZ
Deputy Prime Minister
of the Republic of Iraq